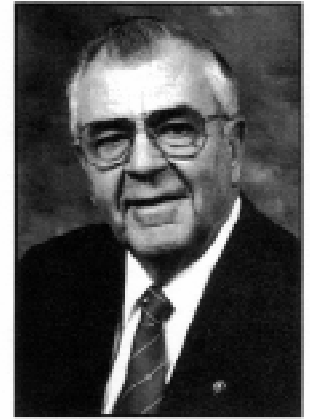


Congressman Herbert H. Bateman *AMERICA'S FIRST DISTRICT — VIRGINIA* **News**



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 1999

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF THE
HON. HERBERT H. BATEMAN, CHAIRMAN,
PANEL ON THE MERCHANT MARINE
on the
Merchant Marine Panel's Recommendations for
H.R. 1401, the National Defense Authorization Act
for Fiscal Year 2000**

My opening statement will be brief so that we might proceed directly with consideration of the panel's recommendations. The Chairman's mark that is before you for consideration consists of two parts. The first part of the Chairman's mark consists of the annual authorization for the U.S. Maritime Administration. This part, if adopted at the full committee markup next week, will be included as Title 36 in the Defense Authorization Act. I would like to highlight two important provisions in this Title. First, the Panel recommended a \$7.6 million increase to begin to address the most serious capital maintenance problems at the US Merchant Marine Academy in order to prevent the deteriorating physical plant from becoming a greater health and safety hazard to the cadets and staff.

In addition, the Panel recommended a \$25 million increase to the Title XI shipbuilding Loan Guarantee Program in order to address the potential shortfall of available shipbuilding loan guarantees resulting from recently signed contract to build two new large US flag vessels in US shipyards. Maintaining US shipbuilding capability is essential to maintaining national security readiness.

The second part consists of the proposed panel recommendations for the Panama Canal Commission, including the final authorization for expenditures and the transition related provisions. This part again if adopted today and at the full committee markup next week, will be included as Title 35 in H.R. 1401, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000.

Before I recognize Congressman Underwood, I want to express my thanks to the members of the panel for their hard work and also to their staffs. I will now recognize the Ranking Member of the Panel, the Honorable Robert Underwood, from Guam, for any opening statement he wishes to make.